

Working Effectively in Interdisciplinary Teams

Nine Criteria for Effective Team Work – Part One

Thanks a lot, Abbie. Based on your feedback and the design of this course, we're going to discuss nine criteria for effective teamwork today. Those can be found on page 10 of your Participant Guide. Linda Culver is going to start taking us through them. Linda?

Thank you, Joe. Let's look at the first criteria for teamwork. It's building and maintaining management support. It is essential that teams gain that commitment and direction from management to help their teams. Some of the things that will be helped as well is the ability to establish common goals and commitment. That also helps us determine what the team composition and expertise is that we need on the team. It also helps to acknowledge our supervisory and budget controls, outline our decision space, our schedules and our expected outcomes. Abbie, would you share a few thoughts on management support?

I would be glad to. Managers can provide I.D. teams with the critical support pieces such as setting the sideboards and parameters for the project, clarifying the decision space of the team and providing team building and training opportunities. Managers can also help by building understanding and knowledge within the team and keeping the team informed. The managers need to listen to the team and they need to ask questions of the team and managers are also there to assist in resolving disputes. Managers need to stay engaged in the team's process, monitor the progress, and communicate with them at critical junctures. An effective team can be most effective

when all these pieces are in place. The Soaring Eagles team is an interdisciplinary team from the Grants Pass Field Office in Oregon. We were fortunate enough to have them develop a series of video clips with the different members and to get -- provide you with some great examples of how teams work. We'll be sharing their thoughts on effective team functioning throughout our discussions today. Now let's hear some of what the team members had to say about management support.

Soaring Eagles: Part of the success of the team is also dependent on management, and management has given us a great deal of support in being able to find our own direction. Our team doesn't always work in the most direct manner, but we do get to a solid solution and develop very good projects that the manager can make a good decision based on what we produce. That support from the management and the freedom that we're allowed and -- from management is really a very important part of the process.

Another thing as a coach is I've noticed over the years as a team has developed they are becoming more and more self-sufficient in terms of knowing the boundaries they have to work within, of going through all of the steps, of what decision space they have, and that's one of the great things that we've had here is managers that have given the teams a decision space and the trust to actually go forth and to do some really good planning work and do some really good projects.

Thank you, Soaring Eagles. We'll be hearing more from you later in the course.

Linda?

Thank you, Abbie. Once we have built management support it's time to look at our second criteria, which is to assign team roles. It's important to establish the team responsibilities, the roles each member will play, commitments made by the team and talk about accountability, which we'll cover in more depth in a moment. Remember that the manager is part of your team. Be sure to define their role. This can help your manager to know what role you would like him or her to play on your team. You may follow along on page 12 of your Participant Guide as we talk about two kinds of accountability. One kind of accountability is within the team. The other is beyond the team.

Let's start with what's within the team. It's important to clarify within the team who is going to do what, how members will work together, the commitments we have as a team for results, some of the questions that will help us establish this is who is responsible for what, how will we see solve conflicts, what behaviors are encouraged in our team, and which are discouraged. We'll spend a lot more time on that later. How team decisions are supported.

Let's look at accountability beyond our team. This clarifies beyond the team commitments we have to our publics for results, who needs to be informed and consulted, where do we get our resources, how do we get our various stakeholders involved in the process, and the questions that we have here, who is going to initiate key tasks, who needs to be informed and who needs to be consulted. What kind of input and what kind of resources do we need in order to make effective decisions? And how do we get that needed support and how do we ensure our success? I'd like to ask our team and the panel here what other examples of team roles and

responsibilities should be considered.

How about figuring out how to share leadership between team members?

And how are you going to build your technical and team skills competent team.

I would suggest the team needs to be empowered so they accept responsibility and are able to manage their own performance and make decisions.

I think also being an advocate versus being a representative.

Jude, could you go a little further on that and explain the difference.

Advocacy is kind of like the program by program approach where the team can get stuck and divided and make poor decisions. Representation allows for a more global perspective where the whole team represents the issues collectively and thus can make better decisions. Additionally team members can often speak for each other and we do this often at my field office because of this crossover education that can mature over time.

To continue with team roles, let's move back to page 11 so we can discuss team mission and vision statements. Quickly, a mission is a concise statement establishing the direction for and the boundaries of the team. A vision is a mental image of the future, the ability to perceive something that is not actually visible, visions tend to describe the end result. For our teams it is a goal, what it is working toward becoming or accomplishing. Mission and vision statements serve as checks and balances for our decisions and the directions we take. There are mission and vision examples in Appendix A on page 38 of your Participant Guide. So check them out. Now we'll hear again from the Soaring Eagles and learn more about the importance of a mission and vision statement.

Soaring Eagles: As far as our mission and vision statements go, it's just something good to always have and keep in front of you and just kind of remember your big overall picture of why we're doing this, where we're going and what we're trying to do.

I think one of the important things and why this team works so well together is that we're -- we have a common goal, we're all working toward the same objectives, and no one feels that they have to push a particular point of view.

Another observation I had, and I think its real key to how this team works, is that they rotate leadership. My experience is somebody got assigned to leadership and they did a pretty good job at it and they kept using them over and over again because it kept everyone happy and you got something done. Well, here was a team that constantly rotated leadership, and I -- I have the suspicion, I have this feeling, that maybe that's why the team works. And I've always known troops. If you want to be a good team member, you need to be a team leader once and experience how hard it is to get folks to work together.

Thank you, Soaring Eagles. We're now on page 13 every your Participant Guide. Our third criteria is to establish ground rules. It is important to set rules for good business practices on our team. Establishing our procedural and logistical norms. We're going to be looking at three areas for setting those. Ground rules that deal with issues before our team meetings, during our team meetings and outside of our team meetings. Before our meetings we want to look at such things as limits, what time limits do we have as a team, what policies affect what we're doing and what authority level the

team has for decision making. You'll also want to pay attention to goals. Yours as a team and also management's goals for the product or the project.

Define where you'll meet, when you'll meet, what you'll accomplish and what you will talk about and how you will get the work done. During our meeting, which is really common for typical ground rules, such things as being on time to meetings, sticking to our agendas, making sure that everyone participates, maintaining order, clarifying opinions and really important, respecting one another. Outside the meeting, there are ground rules as well. How will we follow up and make sure that follow-ups are done? What will we do to check for results to see what we have accomplished? Examples of ground rules can be found in appendix B of your Participant Guide on pages 39 through 41. I have a question for all you participants. Are you ready? Does anyone have an example where not having ground rules impeded the progress of their team? And how did you get past that?

Okay. Great. Linda has posed the first question of the day for our participants. The green light is now on. We're looking forward to hearing from you, so push to talk now. Does anyone have an example where not having ground rules has impeded the progress of your team? And how did you get past that? Okay. We know you're out there, and we don't want to have to just discuss this as a panel today, but think of a situation where you've worked on a team and you haven't had clear ground rules. Has that in some way impeded your progress? How did you get past it?

This is John Snyder in Medford.

Hi, John. Go ahead.

One of the problems I've had in the past with teams and teams is trying to set an agenda too late during the meeting. In other words, the meeting starts before there's an agenda, and the meeting rambles on, and before you know it, the meeting time is over and very little was done.

Great answer. Great answer. I have been to plenty of meetings myself where we haven't had a clear agenda and just think of the commotion that can cause and the wasted time. Does anybody else have an example?

This is Roger in the state office in Wyoming.

Roger, welcome. Turn your TV down just a bit and give us your question today or comment.

I guess my question is, what happens when none of these things, including -- well, all three of the first items -- are adhered to? How do you go about correcting this?

Boy, I'm glad you asked that because we're going to be getting into that a little bit later this morning. It's probably a little early to address that for Roger, but certainly -- would you like to take a quick stab at it, Linda?

Roger, I will take a quick stab at it. I think it's important that these things be done, and what they do is, we'll be talking about, I mentioned earlier, they serve as checks and

balances and there's an opportunity for you to revisit them when you're having the issues and just stop whatever is happening, go back to your mission, the purpose of why your team is there, what you're trying to accomplish and the ground rules you've established and simply ask for them to be adhered today.